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U. S. Study Finds Little Gain In Soviet on Living Standards

WASHINGTON, Nov. 26 (AP) — A study commissioned by the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that the Soviet Union has made only "modest progress" in its drive to equal consumer living standards in the United States and other Western countries.

The study, issued today by the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, forecast that further progress in improving living standards in the Soviet Union "is likely to slow to a crawl" in coming years because of a decline in economic growth.

According to the report, per capita consumption of consumer goods and services in the Soviet Union is less than a third of that in the United States.

It said Soviet priorities favoring heavy industry and the military, together with a "rigid and cumbersome" economic system, "have combined to produce a consumer sector that not only lags badly behind both the West and Eastern Europe, but also is in many respects primitive, grossly unbalanced."

'Shoddy Goods and Services'

For Soviet consumers, the report said, "shoddy goods and services, queues and shortages have become characteristic features of everyday life, along with endemic black markets and corruption."

The study noted that the gap between United States and Soviet living standards narrowed somewhat in the 1960's but began to widen during the 1970's.

"Over the past 20 years, the Soviets have made the most progress in 'catching up' in food, soft goods and durables but have retrogressed relative to the United States in housing, recreation, education and health," it said.

The report was based on a detailed analysis of economic data from 1976,

along with estimates of expected trends since then.

It said that in 1976 expenditures for food, beverages and tobacco accounted for 46 percent of total household spending in the Soviet Union — compared with 17 percent in the United States, 23 percent in France, 27 percent in West Germany, 29 percent in Japan and 35 percent in Spain.

Heavy Spending on Liquor

The pattern of Soviet consumer spending "in many respects conforms to that in the less developed countries, and remarkably little progress toward a more modern pattern has been made in recent decades."

The study pointed to the "extraordinarily large share" — 17 percent — of Soviet household outlays spent on liquor, compared with 1 to 6 percent in the United States and other Western countries.

"The data do not include production of home brew, which adds substantially to Soviet consumption, making the U.S.S.R. a leader in the world hard-liquor-drinking league and creating serious social and economic problems," the report said.

Gertrude E. Schroeder, an economics professor at the University of Virginia, was commissioned by the C.I.A.'s Office of Economic Research to direct the report. It is part of a series of Joint Economic Committee studies on the Soviet economy.